

26 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

some transactions are prominent, others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, In the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have

scornfully thrown
behind them, In a manner which may well
excite their envy.
He has constructed out of their gleanings
works which,
even considered as histories, are scarcely less
valuable than
theirs. But a truly great historian would
reclaim those
materials which the novelist has
appropriated. The history
of the government, and the history of the
people, would be
exhibited in that mode in which alone they
can be ex-
hibited justly, in inseparable conjunction
and inter-
mixture. We should not then have to look for
the wars
and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon,
and for their